

is the goal. And I look forward to working concretely with our European friends and allies to achieve that goal.

And finally, this notion that the United States is getting ready to attack Iran is simply ridiculous. And having said that, all options are on the table. [Laughter]

Bob [Bob Deans, Cox Newspapers].

Democracy in Russia

Q. Mr. President, I wanted to follow up on Plante's question, if I could. I wanted to follow up on——

President Bush. Is this a question on Russia?

Q. Sir?

President Bush. This is a question on Russia?

Q. Yes, sir.

President Bush. Okay.

Q. Do you believe, sir, that Russia is backsliding in its march toward democracy? What troubles you the most about that, and how is that going to shape your conversation with President Putin in 2 days from now?

President Bush. I like a country with a free press—an independent, free press. And there has been some moves where the Russian Government, I guess, for better use of the word, didn't license certain members of the press. I think it's very important that President Putin hear not only from me in a private way, which he will, but also hear some of the concerns that I heard around the table today. There were some concerns from the Baltic nations. And I look forward to carrying their message that it's very important for President Putin

to make very clear why he's made some of the decisions he's made and as well as respect his neighbors.

And I'm confident that can be done in a cordial way. It's important for us to keep a constructive relationship with Russia. We've got a lot to do together. We've got a lot of common projects that will make people more secure around the world, one of which is to make sure that nuclear stockpiles are safeguarded. I look forward to talking to him about that. But I also will remind him that the United States believes strongly in democratic values.

Thank you.

President Juncker. That was it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 6:58 p.m. at the Justus Lipsius Building. The President met with Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg, in his capacity as President of the European Council; President Jose Manuel Durao Barroso of the European Commission; and Secretary General Javier Solana of the European Council. President Juncker made a portion of his remarks in French, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. In his remarks, President Bush referred to President Vladimir Putin of Russia; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; and President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. President Juncker referred to former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri of Lebanon, who was assassinated on February 14 in Beirut. A reporter referred to Russia's Ambassador to the U.S. Yuriy Viktorovich Ushakov.

Remarks at a Luncheon Hosted by Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany in Mainz, Germany February 23, 2005

Gerhard, before I raise my imaginary glass—[laughter]—I do want to thank you

for your hospitality. You and Doris have been very kind to Laura and me, and we

appreciate that. I want to thank all the folks who have come to say hello from around this great country. It means a lot to both of us that you're here.

You know, in the course of my political career, I've often been accused of following in my father's footsteps. I don't know why people say that. [Laughter] I'm proud to be here, 16 years after he was here. I hope he brought my mother because, like me, we both married above ourselves. [Laughter] I'm proud to be traveling with Laura.

The first trip I took since my second inauguration was to Europe, because Europe is a vital relationship for the United States of America. It is in my Nation's interest that Europe be strong. We want a strong partner for peace and freedom. We can't have good, strong relations with Europe if we don't have good relations with Germany. This great nation is the heart of Europe.

My trip today should say to the people of this good country and my country that past disagreements are behind us, and we're moving forward for the good of mankind. And that shouldn't be a surprise to people, because we believe in human rights and human dignity and the worth of every individual.

And so today I come to Germany to raise my imaginary glass to our friendship, our relationship, our ability to work together, and for freedom and peace. May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. in the Grosser Saal Lobby of the Electoral Palace. In his remarks, he referred to Doris Schroeder-Koepf, wife of Chancellor Schroeder. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Chancellor Schroeder.

The President's News Conference With Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder of Germany in Mainz February 23, 2005

Chancellor Schroeder. Thank you very much, indeed, ladies and gentlemen. I'm very pleased, indeed, about this opportunity of welcoming President Bush and his wife, Laura, here in Germany. I think Mainz is an excellent venue for this meeting.

We had a very, very intense discussion, and we basically covered each and every subject that is a high-ranking one on the international political agenda today.

Now, before I go into any kind of detail, let me begin by sharing with you that we find it very important, sir, that you take note of one aspect that is important for both of us. We also talked about climate problems that we have worldwide, and this is an area where we also need a solution. You know we have different—or used to

have different opinions about how to go about these things. The Kyoto Protocol was not appreciated by everybody, and that is something that has continued to exist. But I would like to emphasize that, despite that, we would like to see practical cooperation with the reduction of problems in this area. And we think that there could be room for maneuver, particularly in the field of technology, where the United States of America and Germany both have tremendous know-how, and we would like to deepen cooperation in this field, irrespective of the question of whether Kyoto is the right tool to be going about things or not. And that is something we have first said, and this is a piece of progress that you must not underestimate.